

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Results Of Disney Assessment Of St. Croix Being Held Private To Protect Strategies, Mapp Says

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ST. CROIX -- An assessment of St. Croix by the Disney Corporation to help turn the island into a "[destination experience](#)," which was offered to the Government of the Virgin Islands free of charge after lobbying by Governor Kenneth Mapp, has been fully conducted and a presentation was recently made to senior Mapp administration and Dept. of Tourism officials at Government House in St. Thomas.

That's according to the governor himself, who told The Consortium on Tuesday that Disney has offered to further help the government shape St. Croix into a more appealing tourist attraction, and to help make sure that no monies that could be earned are left on the table.

But the assessment, Mr. Mapp said, is being held private because releasing it would reveal to competing Caribbean islands all that needs to be done to better the tourist experience here. And because it was paid for in full by Disney, the assessment cannot be force-released under the Sunshine Act.

"We're not releasing any of that report because it has essential, competitive advantage strategies particularly for St. Croix, and if we release the report everyone else in the Caribbean will be able to see some of the things that we need to undertake," Mr. Mapp said. The governor described the report as a "working instrument" for the G.V.I. in terms of how it moves to position St. Croix in particular as a destination for visitors, as well as the visitor experience in the entire territory."

Mr. Mapp said the report also opened opportunities for Disney to further assist the V.I., placing the islands in an advantageous position with one of the most formidable companies in tourism and hospitality. Part of the reason for this, Mr. Mapp said, is because Disney's CEO Karl Holtz has family ties to St. Croix dating back to the Fairleigh Dickinson University, which was opened in 1969 and shuttered in 1990, according to [The New York Times](#).

"As a result of that connection, he offered this assistance to us, they made a presentation to us, and that presentation even brought the Disney Corporation to make additional offerings to the territory to assist in dealing with the shortcomings, building on the strengths, and really helping the business community particular on St. Croix, and I'll use their terms, "not leaving dollars on the table," meaning that there are passengers coming to St. Croix and just because of the way we are aligning ourselves, and the things we are not doing, passengers are taking money right back on the boat and spending it somewhere else." The governor said his administration is forming a Governor's Visitors Experience task force with the private and public sector that aims to capitalize on the findings.

The assessment serves as vindication to the governor after many doubted that any aid would be offered by Disney after he made the announcement mid-March 2015 during the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting. Mr. Mapp said he had been in conversations with cruise industry officials, and in a meeting with Mr. Holtz, he asked whether Disney had any plans for St. Croix.

In response, Mr. Holtz, Mr. Mapp said, "talked about the issues of the duplication of visits. [He said Disney has] tried St. Croix and there are some issues, in terms of it getting ready and being a fully fledged cruise ship destination."

However, Mr. Mapp said he asked Mr. Holtz to consider including St. Croix on his cruise line's itinerary.

"I said, 'I need help [and] I'm willing to help you [with] the cruise industry, and cruise traffic in the Virgin Islands is essential to our economy, and I'm going to support that, but I need help for where I come from'," the governor explained.

It was after his candid request that Mr. Mapp said Mr. Holtz "extended to the people of the Virgin Islands, and to you, the full portfolio of Disney's technical support system."